

Hanks heads ensemble cast in Coen Brothers remake

By Kam Williams
Sentinel-Voice

In these days when directors complain about a dearth in the quality screenplays, if you're going to remake a movie, it makes sense to pick one that landed an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Script. Such is the case with "The Ladykillers," written in 1955 by the legendary Billy Rose, a four-time nominee.

Rose also authored "It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World" (1963), "The Russians Are Coming, the Russians Are Coming" (1966) and "Guess Who's Coming to Dinner" (1967).

The original, set in London and starring Sir Alec Guinness and Peter Sellers, was a dark comedy about an ill-fitting confederacy of thieves whose plans for an elaborate heist is discovered by its leader's elderly landlady. Before she can divulge their secret, they take turns trying to kill the moralizing matron, though fate always seems to have something else in mind.

Though updated to reflect the times by the Oscar-winning team of Ethan and Joel Coen (Fargo), the new version follows the first Ladykillers' plot line fairly closely. However, it now takes place in present-day Mississippi and arrives heavily-laden with Christian and African-American themes. The film centers around Marva Munson (Irma P. Hall), a Bible-thumping widow who unwittingly rents a room out to an overly polite Southern gent named Professor G.H. Dorr (Tom Hanks).

In truth, the professor is the ringleader of a quintet of co-conspirators planning to rob a riverboat gambling casino by digging from Marva's



Though the tone of the film is macabre, Marlon Wayans, right, and Tom Hanks breathe life into "The Ladykillers."

basement to a vault housed in the building next door. Dorr's partners in crime include Gawain MacSam (Marlon Wayans) a crass gangsta' rap poser who infiltrates the casino through his job as a janitor. The cast also includes Lump Hudson (Ryan Hurst), a beefy muscleman known more for his brawn than his brain; The General (Tzi Ma), a Vietnamese vet and expert at digging tunnels; and Garth Pancake, a munitions expert and jack-of-all-trades.

Grounded by an earthy gospel soundtrack, in much the same way that "O Brother, Where Art Thou" was driven by bluegrass tunes, "The Ladykillers" is fun enough for its soulful spirituals alone. But the irrepressible Marva doesn't suffer fools lightly, which doesn't bode well for Gawain. This pair finds themselves often at odds, with the elderly granny getting the best of every exchange, as she objects to everything from his music to his dress to his cursing.

Marva has run-ins with the others, too, but is at her best

bemoaning the state of contemporary Black culture, as represented by the "hippy-hoppers," as she calls them. For, as she observes, it's been more than 30 years since the passing of Martin Luther King Jr., yet they refer to their own people with the "N-word." Another priceless scene has a pair of gun-toting, ghetto gangstas holding up a Korean convenience store, only to be taken down by the mom-and-pop proprietors by a pair of well-placed fingers up the nose and a well-aimed pot of scalding coffee.

Many might be put off by "The Ladykillers" macabre mood, for this is a farce with a sick sense of humor. But Coen Brothers fans familiar with "O Brother," "The Big Lebowski" and "Fargo," have a good idea of what to expect. Despite cartoon-like characters, over-the-top hijinks and occasional lapses of bad taste, any movie that leaves you laughing up the aisle has come well recommended.

Very Good (3 stars). Rated R for profanity and sexual references.

Siegfried & Roy to promote show

LAS VEGAS (AP) - Almost six months after a white tiger mauled illusionist Roy Horn of "Siegfried & Roy," forcing the long-running stage show to close, the two say they will soon be back in the entertainment business.

The duo will promote the NBC animated series, "Father of the Pride," about a family of white lions who work as performers in their show, officials said.

"It's the beginning of a new era for Siegfried & Roy," said Bernie Yuman, manager for Horn and Siegfried Fischbacher, whose Las Vegas show made

them entertainment icons.

Yuman and NBC spokeswoman Rebecca Marks in Burbank, Calif., confirmed Friday that Fischbacher and Horn have agreed with DreamWorks head Jeffrey Katzenberg to promote the animated series slated to debut this fall.

The "Siegfried & Roy" show debuted at The Mirage hotel in 1990 and became one of the most successful and lucrative in Las Vegas, drawing an estimated 400,000 a people a year and generating an estimated \$44 million in annual revenue for the Mirage's casino.

Pollard

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shrimp and all the vegetable trimmings.

Dr. Pollard was presented with several awards during the evening. Paulette Simpson presented a proclamation on behalf of U.S. Sen. Jon Ensign, Congresswoman Shelley Berkley, represented by Piper Overstreet, awarded Dr. Pollard with a congressional recognition. Ida Gaines, representative for U.S. Sen. Harry Reid, gave words of praise.

Fire Chief Dave Washington and his charming wife, Marcia, were there to honor Dr. Pollard.

"I am so elated for that brother and his wife for their continuous positive contributions. They continue to make a better community for all of us," Chief Washington said.

Several Las Vegans who traveled to Atlanta for the Trumpet Awards were present, including Mrs. Anne Bailey, wife of Dr. William "Bob" Bailey, Judge Wendy Cooley, Martha Jordan, Rita Coleman, actor Zake Mokae and his gracious



Dr. Anthony Pollard

wife Mandy.

The list of shakers and movers was long: Hannah Brown, Urban Chamber of Commerce; Verlia D. Hoggard; Dr. Joe Lubritz, Ear, Nose and Throat specialist; and Carla Perez, CEO of Spring Valley Hospital.

Also in attendance was former FBI Agent in Charge Bobby Sellers, now of the Gaming Commission; Cordell and Genie Stokes, son of the late Carl Stokes, first Black mayor of a major U.S.

city; Larry Mosley, president of 100 Black Men; Cynthia Evans; engineer Ken Erwin; Barbara Wright, Kiara Jones, Dwayne Morgan, North Las Vegas Podiatrist Dr. Christie Clark, Dr. Sandra Mack and husband, Danny Mack; and Debraca Foxx-Davis, daughter of the late great Redd Foxx.

The author of "Just Imagine" children's book series, Tamara Butler, was among the many well-wishers, as was William French Smith, retired public school safety engineer of Denver, Colo.

Diane Pollard, who was instrumental in starting the Rainbow Dreams Academy and the Pollard Charitable Foundation, announced the approval by the city of the charter school site at 916 W. Lake Mead Blvd. and also receipt of a \$69,000 grant. The evening was a tremendous success.

As he lives his dreams, the man with the aura of humility continues to make the dreams of so many others come true. Congratulations, Dr. Anthony Pollard.

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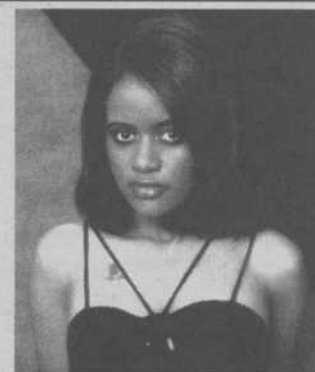
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